

for consumers, states, and industry. That is key. Congress should not spin its wheels and push for a burdensome and overly complex titling scheme that most states will reject even if they are eligible to receive offsetting federal funding or are penalized in some way for not adopting such a scheme. The only winners under such a scenario are the thieves and charlatans who will continue to take advantage of state inconsistencies by washing the titles of severely damaged vehicles.

Instead of being a federal mandate, The National Salvage Motor Vehicle Consumer Protection Act provides participating states with a new incentive grant to adopt uniform titling and registration standards. These standards will protect the used car buyers in their states from unknowingly purchasing totaled and subsequently rebuilt vehicles. The authorized funding can be used by states to issue new titles, establish and administer vehicle theft or safety inspections, enforce titling requirements, and for other related purposes.

Mr. President, since this is a voluntary program, no state will be penalized for non participation.

Mr. President, this particular approach was recommended by the Department of Transportation. It was a sound recommendation and I accepted it.

This modification is good public policy since it no longer links state participation with federal seed money for states to participate in the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System (NMVTIS).

NMVTIS is beneficial to states because it will allow them to instantaneously share and retrieve titling and registration information with each other. The effectiveness of NMVTIS depends on the total number of states that choose to participate in the system. Thus, it is important to have the maximum number of states using NMVTIS whether or not they utilize common terms. The Congressional Budget Office concluded in 1997 that a penalty-based titling branding scheme which denies states funding for NMVTIS would significantly reduce the number of states that choose to utilize the system. This, in turn, would severely undermine the intent of the 103rd Congress which created NMVTIS and would jeopardize the overall effectiveness of a nationwide titling information system.

I think it is also important to note that the National Salvage Motor Vehicle Consumer Protection Act does not recommend definitions or standards that none of the 50 states currently have in place. Instead, this legislation accepts, codifies, and in some cases improves upon the recommendations put forward by a Congressionally mandated task force. A commission created by a Democratically controlled Congress to specifically address the issue of title fraud.

The National Salvage Motor Vehicle Consumer Protection Act goes even further in the direction of promoting

disclosure by requiring a written disclosure statement be provided to purchasers of rebuilt salvage vehicles. It permits states to use terms that are synonymous with those identified in the bill. And, it expressly allows states to adopt even greater disclosure standards than are provided for in the legislation. In the case of salvage vehicles, it lets states adopt an even lower threshold than 75% if they so choose. It does not, however, establish a minimum baseline of 65%, a threshold that no state in the union has today. None. The 65% threshold would negatively affect tens of millions of car owners with low value vehicles. A proposal advanced by some that would unnecessarily brand for life the vehicles of low income drivers involved in minor accidents such as fender-benders.

There are similar counter-productive proposals that would brand vehicles that have only slight cosmetic and structural damage such as a dented front end and a busted headlight. Who benefits from this? Who will be harmed by this? I want answers to these questions. America's motor vehicle owners deserve answers to these questions.

I think my colleagues will agree that Congress should not force states into enacting standards that adversely impact consumers or titling provisions that not even one state has chosen to adopt. Remember, these well intentioned but impractical, confusing, and unwise proposals have been around for many years. States, as well as the task force, expressly rejected them. No one who works on vehicle titling issues wants them.

Let me say again that the National Salvage Motor Vehicle Consumer Protection Act creates a voluntary federal titling program. It creates minimal national standards while offering participating states the flexibility they need and want to adopt additional disclosure requirements and more stringent provisions. It provides appropriate vehicle titling terms and definitions that do not unnecessarily devalue vehicles or cause repairable automobiles to be junked. The bill focuses on pre-purchase disclosure, helps motorists by requiring the tracking of salvage vehicle VIN numbers, continues consumers' ability to pursue private rights of actions available under state law, and allows states to adopt new civil and criminal penalties. And, it has widespread support.

The National Salvage Motor Vehicle Consumer Protection Act is the right legislative solution to combat title fraud. It solves the problem without creating new problems and new headaches for consumers, for states, and for industry. It is time for Congress to pass this important measure.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, April 19, 1999, the federal debt stood at \$5,624,235,766,178.82 (Five trillion, six hundred twenty-four billion, two hundred thirty-five million, seven hundred

sixty-six thousand, one hundred seventy-eight dollars and eighty-two cents).

Five years ago, April 19, 1994, the federal debt stood at \$4,565,951,000,000 (Four trillion, five hundred sixty-five billion, nine hundred fifty-one million).

Ten years ago, April 19, 1989, the federal debt stood at \$2,776,338,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred seventy-six billion, three hundred thirty-eight million).

Fifteen years ago, April 19, 1984, the federal debt stood at \$1,487,346,000,000 (One trillion, four hundred eighty-seven billion, three hundred forty-six million).

Twenty-five years ago, April 19, 1974, the federal debt stood at \$470,921,000,000 (Four hundred seventy billion, nine hundred twenty-one million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,153,314,766,178.82 (Five trillion, one hundred fifty-three billion, three hundred fourteen million, seven hundred sixty-six thousand, one hundred seventy-eight dollars and eighty-two cents) during the past 25 years.

#### WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1999

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the Water Resources Development Act of 1999. This bill has passed the Senate under unanimous consent thanks to the leadership of its sponsor Senator WARNER, and Senator CHAFEE, Chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee and Senator BAUCUS, the ranking member on the Committee. I want to thank the Senators for their work.

Included in this legislation is a request that the Army Corps of Engineers evaluate plans to alleviate flooding and make other improvements to the Muddy River, which runs through Brookline and Boston, Massachusetts. This is an urgently needed project.

The Muddy River flows through mostly urban-residential areas in Brookline and Boston before emptying into the Charles River. The River has flooded several times in the past, with two particularly severe floods in 1996 and 1998. The 1996 flood was a presidentially declared disaster. It lasted three days, submerged parts of Brookline and Boston in knee-deep water, flooded underground Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority stations and halted commuter train traffic, and extensively damaged homes and businesses. Massachusetts Governor Paul Cellucci estimates that the cost of these two floods exceeded \$100,000,000. Preventing future damage from floods is a top priority for the Town of Brookline, the City of Boston and the State of Massachusetts, and each has pledged to do their part to find a solution.

Specifically, the Water Resources Development Act of 1999 asks the Secretary of the Army to evaluate a study called the "Emerald Necklace Environmental Improvement Master Plan: